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ABSTRACT

A study analyzed ideas expressed by 38 parents of 4- to 5-year-old children about their socialization goals and the best ways of helping their child to attain them, with special attention to the domain of literacy. All the participating families had a child enrolled in kindergarten or first grade, all included an older child, and all were residents of Baltimore, Maryland. Parental goals, elicited through interviews and diaries, ranged widely and more often emphasized the moral/social and personal domains of development than intellectual and academic skills. Both the domain of development considered and the sociocultural background of the family influenced parents' preferred approach to socialization. Proactive intervention strategies (such as deliberate instruction) were more often cited for the domain of literacy than for moral development and were more often cited for the cultivation of literacy by low-income parents, whereas middle-income parents more often preferred a strategy of reliance on the child's experience. Preference for proactive intervention was related to an emphasis on the cultural theme of literacy as a set of skills to be acquired, while reliance on experience was related to the theme of literacy as a source of entertainment. Parents attributed greater responsibility to the school relative to the home for the socialization of children's literacy than for their moral development. Idiographic profiles of selected parents' ideas about these various issues are represented as illustrations of caregiver ethnotheories, and the implication are discussed for cooperative communication between parents and teachers about children's early introduction to literacy. (Contains 52 references and 7 tables of data. An appendix presents interview questions.) (Author/RS)

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National Reading Research Center

READING RESEARCH REPORT NO. 78
Winter 1997

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The National Reading Research Center (NRRC) is funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the U.S. Department of Education to conduct research on reading and reading instruction. The NRRC is operated by a consortium of the University of Georgia and the University of Maryland College Park in collaboration with researchers at several institutions nationwide.

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Abstract. *This report presents an analysis of ideas expressed by parents of 4 to 5 year-old children about their socialization goals and the best ways of helping their child to attain them, with special attention to the domain of literacy. All the participating families had a child enrolled in kindergarten or first grade, all included an older child, and all were residents of Baltimore City. Parental goals, elicited with an innovative method, ranged widely and more often emphasized the moral/social and personal domains of development than intellectual and academic skills. Both the domain of development considered and the sociocultural background of the family influenced parents' preferred approach to socialization. Proactive intervention strategies (such as deliberate instruction) were more often cited for the domain of literacy than for moral development and were more often cited for the cultivation of literacy by low-income parents, whereas middle-income parents more often preferred a strategy of relizane on the child's experience. Preference for proactive intervention was related to an emphasis on the cultural theme of literacy as a set of skills to be acquired, while reliance on experience was related to the theme of literacy as a source of entertainment. Parents attributed greater responsibility to the school relative to the home for the socialization of children's literacy than for their moral development. Idiographic profiles of selected parents' ideas abou these various issues are presented as illustrations of caregiver thnotheories, and the implications are discussed for cooperative communication between parents and teachers about children's early introduction to literacy.*

The Early Childhood Project in Baltimore is an attempt to understand, in several contrastive sociocultural groups, the interactive processes through which children explore and gradually appropriate cultural resources in the environment, including the practices and technology of literacy. Our guiding hypotheses are as follows: (1) distinctive patterns of socialization practices can be identified in the home environments of children being raised as members of different sociocultural groups; (2) those distinctive patterns are reflected in different implicit theories of child development and

parental responsibility among the children's primary caregivers; (3) a major source of variation in the patterns of school performance by children of different sociocultural groups is the variable degree to which the socialization practices and associated beliefs of their home environment match the developmental pathway defined by the curriculum of public elementary schools.

The interaction between child development and its context has been treated in various ways by different theorists (Serpell, 1993b). One set of perspectives conceptualizes context as external stimulation that shapes behavior (Skinner, 1953), affords action possibilities (Gibson, 1982), calls for adaptation (Piaget, 1971), or provides information (Sternberg, 1984). Another, more complex, type of perspective construes context as an incorporating system of social activity (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Lave & Wenger, 1991), informed by a system of cultural meanings (D'Andrade, 1984; Shweder, 1990). A combination of these various theoretical insights is offered by the notion of a developmental niche (Super & Harkness, 1986), or eco-cultural niche of development (Gallimore, Weisner, Kaufmann, & Bernheimer, 1989), which embraces the dimensions of external stimulation, social activity, and cultural meaning. Super and Harkness (1986), for instance, distinguish three types of interrelated structure: physical and social settings, customs of child care, and the implicit psychology shared by caregivers.

In this project, we have sought to document all three of these dimensions through an ecological inventory of recurrent activities in the child's everyday home experience as well as those more formally structured by schools, through reports by parents of their child-rearing practices and by teachers of their methods of instruction, and through reflective discussions with parents and teachers concerning their implicit theories of child development and socialization.

In one of our earlier reports on the project, we focused on variations in approach to literacy socialization reflected in the range of recurrent, home-based activities in which the children of our sample participated during their prekindergarten year (Baker, Sonnenschein, Serpell, Fernandez-Fein, & Scher, 1994). Such activities constitute one dimension of the cultural practices (Goodnow, Miller, & Kessel, 1995) that characterize the niche. They were described to us by each participating child's primary caregiver in two ways: a "diary" kept for a one-week period at our request, and an "ecological inventory" elicited in a follow-up interview conducted during a visit to the child's home. Our analysis of those data led us to identify three cultural themes invoked in the caregivers' descriptions: that literacy is a source of entertainment, that literacy consists of a set of skills to be acquired, and that literacy is an integral feature of everyday life. The middle- income families in our sample more often reported activities consistent with the theme of literacy as a source of entertainment, and the low-income families more often reported activities consistent with the theme of literacy as a set of skills to be acquired.

A second report analyzed the relation between the degree of emphasis placed on these

different cultural themes in a child's developmental niche and the emergence of various strands of literacy-related competence (Sonnenschein, Baker, Serpell, Fernandez-Fein, Scher, & Munsterman, 1996). For both low-income and middle-income families, we found that an entertainment-oriented approach was more predictive of certain early competencies than a skills-oriented approach. Our index of orientation toward these two themes was a composite score based on the number of different types of print-related activities reported in the diaries and on the caregiver's answers to an interview question about the most effective way to help their child learn to read and write. Emergent competencies were assessed with a battery of tests administered individually at the child's school, focusing on narrative production, phonological awareness, and knowledge about print. The degree of emphasis in the home on literacy as a source of entertainment was significantly and positively related to the child's phonological awareness (during prekindergarten), knowledge about print (during both prekindergarten and kindergarten), and narrative competence (during kindergarten). In all cases (even when the correlation failed to reach significance), the correlations between scores on the entertainment orientation index and scores on the three strands of literacy-related competence were positive.

In the present report, we take up the documentation of the third dimension of the niche: the implicit cultural models of child development and socialization held by those responsible for child care and child-rearing, that is, "caregiver ethnotheories" (Serpell, Baker, Sonnenschein, & Hill, 1991). We present an analysis of the ideas expressed to us by parents during two extensive interviews that were designed to build on and expand the insights gained from the diary and the ecological inventory.

Our methodological orientation seeks to synthesize the complementary contributions of quantitative measurement and analysis with those of qualitative description and interpretation. In this paper, we weave together these two different modes of documentation as we explore the relations among several psychological and cultural constructs and variables. We begin with a selective review of previous research.

Parental Ethnotheories

The cultural context of child development constitutes both a set of constraints to which a child must adapt and a conceptual framework for interpreting developmental change. The theoretical shift from conceiving context as external stimulation to conceiving it as an incorporating system of social activity and cultural meanings has methodological implications. Rather than describing the behavior of a caregiver as an external causal influence on the development of a child, researchers can learn more from engaging him or her in interpretive discussion of the hopes and fears, goals and beliefs that inform his or her interactions with the child. Such hermeneutical discussion acknowledges the responsibility of researchers, parents, and teachers to co-construct, or negotiate, a shared understanding of possibilities for the enhancement of children's developmental opportunities (Serpell, 1994).

The study of ethnotheories has a much longer history in anthropology than in psychology, and the literature is rich with hypotheses about how culture informs this aspect of the developmental niche. Standard ethnographic techniques, however, while generating evocative accounts of culturally distinctive systems of ideas, "fail to make clear exactly what individual natives really believe, since these studies focus primarily on collective representations of various kinds, such as myth and ritual" (D'Andrade, 1990, p. 108; see also Jahoda, 1982). Within psychology, on the other hand, research on parental beliefs has often been guided by little or no theory, giving rise to isolated investigations of unrelated beliefs rather than more programmatic research (Goodnow, 1988; S. Miller, 1988). As a consequence, the origins of the beliefs and the processes controlling the relationship between beliefs and behavior remain poorly understood, and many of the results reported seem scarcely applicable to real people and situations.

Two recent reviews have identified trends and gaps in the literature about parental ideas. Miller (1988) suggested that future research in this area should pay special attention to studying parents' actual beliefs as opposed to the beliefs that psychologists think they should have, to studying beliefs comparatively, to conducting longitudinal studies of how beliefs develop and change, and to conducting more cultural comparisons but "measuring differences in experience directly rather than inferring differences from group membership" (p. 281). Goodnow and Collins (1990) noted that both individual and cultural variations have been documented with respect to parents' goals, their conceptions of the initial nature of children, their conceptions of the course of development (its stages, how they are linked, the timetable of developmental change), of the contributions of heredity and environment, and, in particular, of their responsibilities as caregivers and agents of socialization. They stressed the need for further research on the processes involved in the change of an individual parent's ideas over time and the value of focusing such research on major developmental transitions, where "the changes in children are highly visible, and the implications of the change are likely to be significant to both parents and children and to the relationship between them."

Our reading of the psychological literature suggests two additional problems in ascertaining parental beliefs. One is that parents may have many different beliefs about their children and these beliefs may not always be readily available for conscious reflection. For example, Rodrigo and Triana (1996) present intriguing empirical evidence regarding how the various components of a belief system are represented in memory and how they are deployed in making practical judgments and formulating expectations of behavior. They are critical of the notion that ethnotheoretical, lay beliefs about child development and socialization are represented in an individual's memory in the form of structurally organized schemas and conclude that it is the "structure of information presented" that is crucial for the elaboration of inferences about actions.

In our work, the respondent's attention has been focused on a particular child for whom she or he is the primary caregiver, beginning

with a descriptive account of recurrent activities in the child's everyday life in the home environment, and gradually expanding through an interpretive discussion of those activities toward more abstract expression of the caregivers' principal hopes and expectations for the child's future development, and of her beliefs about how those and other desirable outcomes can best be promoted.

One type of explanatory schema of particular interest to us is the notion of a developmental goal for the child, toward which the parent construes her socialization practices as oriented. We recognize that there may be considerable variation among parents in how deliberately their practices are focused on molding or nurturing a certain direction of development. Hallden (1991), for instance, reports that two contrasting themes coexisted for many of the contemporary Swedish parents she interviewed: an Aristotelian concept of "the child as being" whose development is a natural process directed by inner drives and for whom parents should be available as a resource, and an alternative concept of "the child as project" whose development the parent should actively strive to influence by serving as an introducer or mediator. Parents may invoke either of these contrasting models, both of which are well represented in the public domain of contemporary Swedish culture, "in order to understand and come to grips with various problems" (p. 339) that arise in the context of caregiving. Nevertheless, we suppose that a quality of directionality is intrinsic to most people's conception of child development, and regard the emphasis that we placed in our interviews on this topic as logically essential to the ensuing discussions that we planned about the process of education.

A second problem, which has not been adequately tackled in current research, arises from what appear to be formally incompatible beliefs or beliefs that are incompatible with practices. For example, several researchers have asked parents of children attending American schools about their perceptions of the significance of schooling (Stevenson et al., 1990; Laosa, 1984; Okagaki & Sternberg, 1991). In all of these studies, low-income parents of minority culture groups tended to endorse academic goals even more highly than middle-class, mainstream groups. Yet the pattern of academic achievement of those low-income minority group children is relatively weak, and in some cases the young people go on to express a countercultural disenchantment with the mainstream culture as it is presented in the schools (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu, 1990). We suspect that this seeming discrepancy between beliefs and behaviors may be more apparent than real. There may be several reasons for this pattern of findings. The alienation may arise from experiences of children in the elementary school, subverting an initially positive orientation (Snow et al., 1991). Parents may send their children double messages (Ogbu, 1990). Parents may have more than one goal for their child and these goals may be weighted differently, with the most highly weighted goals (not necessarily those tapped by the researcher) getting the most attention. In addition, parents of minority cultural groups and/or economically oppressed social groups may tend to exaggerate the degree to which they agree with the philosophy that informs the

school system. This may occur partly out of hopeful optimism that things will turn out better for their children than they did for themselves, partly because they do not perceive clearly the areas in which their personal and cultural orientation differ from that of the school teachers, and partly because there exists in contemporary American society a strong public cultural theme that schooling is a major route for upward social mobility. All of these factors may create a social desirability response bias that is difficult for researchers to get beyond when interviewing parents of lower socioeconomic status.

Another example of incompatible beliefs comes from the work of Serpell (1977, 1982) in Zambia, who used semi-structured interviews with caregivers in Chewa villages to explore adult perceptions of the most valuable attributes of child behavior. Although many parents endorsed the principle of enrolling their children in school, they apparently had other, more highly valued goals as well. Serpell concluded that the indigenous formulation of intellectual development in relation to moral development and socialization differed in important respects from the formal educational model of cognitive growth that informs the primary school curriculum. This discrepancy generated grave difficulties for students, parents and teachers in integrating the cultures of home and school (Serpell, 1993a).

The degree of such discordance between the orthodoxy of public education and the indigenous ethnotheories of client families is unlikely to be as great in a society such as the USA, where formal education has been institutionalized over several generations. But the city in which our study is situated, like many other American cities in the 1990s, includes an impoverished center characterized by high rates of adult illiteracy and high school drop out, along with other features of what some authors have termed a growing urban underclass (e.g., Wilson, 1990). In such communities we expected to find a certain number of parents with limited, weak, or aversive personal histories of contact with the school system and its agenda. The city also contains a few wealthy neighborhoods and a substantial, middle-income residential zone, where school attendance and adult literacy rates are much higher. In order to permit valid comparisons between such diverse groups, we considered it methodologically essential to define the focus of our inquiry broadly enough for the more alienated families not to perceive us as simply agents of the school. This approach has afforded us the substantive advantage of learning about parents' views concerning emergent literacy within a wider array of issues confronting all parents than has commonly been the case in literacy research.

Parents in the Early Childhood Project were asked to report first on their children's behaviors. We used the reported behaviors as a springboard for interpretive discussion about parental goals and beliefs and how these are related to practices. Through open-ended interviews, we sought to understand the multiplicity of ideas that parents have about child development and how these ideas are interrelated. In this report, we examine the goals that parents of prekindergartners have for their children; we consider parental ideas about how children learn to read and write, and how they

can best be assisted to do so, including the relative responsibilities of the home and school; we compare parents' ideas about literacy development to their ideas about moral development; and we present several case studies illustrating consistency in the socialization goals and ideas of individual parents elicited with different questions at different times. The contrasting cultural themes about literacy development identified in our earlier work are revisited and further elaborated in this paper. While the methods of this investigation are summarized in the next section, a more detailed account will be presented elsewhere with a focus on the innovative contribution that we believe they make to the methodology of assessment of caregiver ethnotheories.

The data reported here were collected from our sample of caregivers when the children in the project were in prekindergarten and kindergarten. As the project continues, we plan to examine the stability and changes in each caregiver's theoretical ideas or models as their child progresses through the early years of formal schooling, and the particular ways in which those models are related to her observed pattern of interaction with the child. We recognize that our use of the term *ethnotheory* tends to imply that certain influences on the content of the individual parent's implicit understanding arise from culturally mediated experiences shared among members of an ethnic group. In fact, however, one of our empirical goals is to determine the degree to which those parameters are shared among members of ethnic groups, socioeconomic classes, or other classificatory groupings of caregivers, such as those who reside in the same or similar neighborhoods.

Method

Participant Families

The sample of families on which this report is based comprised 38 of the 43 families initially recruited to participate in the first phase of the ongoing Early Childhood Project between January and June 1993. Families were recruited from among the total enrollment in prekindergarten classes at six public elementary schools in Baltimore serving four contrastive types of neighborhood: (1) two ethnically homogeneous, African-American, low-income neighborhoods; (2) two ethnically homogeneous, European-American, low-income neighborhoods; (3) one ethnically heterogeneous, low-income neighborhood; and (4) one ethnically heterogeneous, middle-income neighborhood. Both of the ethnically heterogeneous neighborhoods were populated by an even mix of African-American and European-American families. Income levels of the families were controlled by recruiting only families that received free or subsidized lunch at the schools serving low-income neighborhoods, and excluding any such children from the sample at the school catering to a middle-income neighborhood. Each family included at least one older child. Further details of the sampling frame are reported by Baker et al. (1994).

The sample of parents interviewed comprised 36 mothers and two fathers. Their ages ranged from 21 to 43 years, with a mean age of 30.6 years. Parents' level of education

varied within the sample, with 6 parents never attending high school (16%), 4 parents completing some high school (11%), 17 parents earning a high school diploma or GED (45%), and 10 parents completing some college or vocational school (26%). The number of boys and girls in the sample (focal children) was approximately equal (females = 20, males = 17).

Interview Procedures

Overview. Our method involved a series of steps through which we engaged the child's primary caregiver in conversations about the child that were grounded in ostensible, recurrent activities of the child's everyday life:

Step 1: identification of recurrent activities (Diary)

Step 2: survey of recurrent activities (Ecological inventory)

Step 3: elicitation of caregiver meanings

(First ethnotheoretical interview: Ethno #1)

Step 4: (a) specification of a personal hierarchy of child socialization goals;

(b) articulation of beliefs related to these and other socialization goals (Ethno #2)

Step 5: review of goals in relation to those of other caregivers (Ethno #3).

The time period over which these steps were distributed ranged from 3 to 9 months, with a mean of 6.88. At the time of the Ethno #2 interview, the mean age of the focal children was 5 years; 0 months (sd 0.34 yrs; range 4;3–5;9). Each of the interviews was conducted by a graduate research assistant (RA), accompanied by an undergraduate student member of the research team. The pair assigned to visit a given family always included at least one interviewer whose ethnicity superficially matched that of the primary caregiver. Appendix A includes the complete set of interview items and procedures. Given length constraints, however, we will not address all of these elements in the present report. Table 1 summarizes only those procedures and questions pertinent to the analyses reported here.

The interview series. The first step in the interview series was to request the caregiver to keep a diary of the child's everyday life for a week, in order to generate an account of the week's constituent activities phrased in the caregiver's own preferred vocabulary. The caregiver was invited to choose between recording her description in writing in a notebook, or dictating it onto a portable cassette-recorder. (See Baker et al., 1994, for further discussion of the diary procedures.)

The diary was collected and examined for examples of the following broad categories of potentially recurrent activity: games and play activities; mealtime activities; TV, video, and music activities; recurrent outings; and reading, writing, or drawing activities. Examples of each type were transferred verbatim from the diary to the interview guide and formed the opening theme of each phase of a structured interview that we have entitled the "ecological inventory." In this second step, we asked the caregiver to specify whether there were any other activities of this type that were recurrent in the child's everyday life. We then probed to find out whether particular pre-coded subcategories of this type of activity occurred and if so with what frequency and with which co-participants (see Baker et al., 1994, for further details about the Ecological Inventory).

Table 1
Summary of research procedures relevant for this report

Interview Visit	Key Questions/Queries
Diary	• When making your diary entry, think about the following kinds of activities: getting up activities, breakfast activities, morning activities, lunch activities, afternoon activities, dinner activities, evening activities, going to bed. Remember to include: What your child was doing; what kinds of items were used; who else was there and what were they doing; and how long did the activity go on for.
Eco-inventory/	
Ethnotheory 1	• Pt 1 (Eco): queries related to the frequency, participant structure, and examples of specific types of activities falling in the broad categories of: game-playing; meal-time activities; recurrent outings; reading, writing, drawing; TV watching, radio, etc.
	• Pt2 (Ethno): Exploration of the meaning of select activities noted in the diary or mentioned in the Eco-inventory: What does this mean to you? What do you think it means to FC (the focal child)?
Ethnotheory 2	• In our earlier conversation, you mentioned or hinted at the following things you see as important for your child as s/he is growing up. (List of proposed goals or wishes, wants.) Which of these goals for your child is the most importnat in your view?
	• It seems that parents have differing ideas about the most effective way of helping a young child to learn (about right and wrong; the physical world; to speak and understand language; to read and write; and about numbers), and teachers also do not always agree with one another about this. What do you believe is the most effective way to help your child learn about some of these things?
	• I'm going to ask you to tell me now how you feel about the responsibilities of the school and the home for each of these parts of the child's learning. Does one of these two worlds in which the child gains experience have more responsibility than the other, and do they have different responsibilities?
Ethnotheory 3	Today we would like to ask you to react to some statements by other parents. I am going to read you a list of various goals that parents in your neighborhood and in other Baltimore neighborhoods have told us that they have for their four-year-old child. And for each one I would like for you to tell me whether this goal is also important to you as a parent. I would like you to rate each of these goals on a scale from 1 to 5.
	Now, before we leave this topic, I'd like to ask you to compare the goals you rated most highly in each of the three lists. If you had to choose, which of the goals would you rate as most important of all, which would you rate second most important, and so on.

The third step (Ethno #1) was conducted immediately following the ecological inventory as a continuation of the same interview and was also grounded in the vocabulary of the diary. We opened this phase by announcing that we would like to discuss the caregiver's ideas about what is most important in the child's life at this stage of his or her development and the caregiver's reasons for considering these things important. Recapping on the ecological inventory, we noted that the child has a number of toys (mentioning some actual examples), watches TV quite frequently (if applicable), has a number of playmates (friends and/or siblings, whom we name), and enjoys doing X with adult A, and doing Y with child B, drawing on the diary and the ecological interview for the specification of X, Y, A, and B. We then asked the caregiver "to tell us a bit more about what these various aspects of your child's life mean" to the child and to the caregiver.

In order to concretize this conversational agenda, we told the respondent that parents have given us a number of explanations for why they buy toys for their children and that we would like to know the interviewee's opinion. Parents have also expressed various views about which children their own child should be allowed to play with, and we requested the interviewee's opinion on this topic. Likewise we asked the caregiver to explain to us what she feels, given the diversity of parental views on the matter, about the activity of watching TV.

Having set the scene in this way for an expression of personal opinion concerning aspects of their child's everyday life, we proceeded to ask, for a set of at least six, individualized recurrent activities (previously described by the caregiver in the diary and/or the ecological inventory):

> What do you think this activity means to _____ (the focal child)?
>
> What does it mean to you as her/his parent (caregiver)?

The answers to these questions formed the basis for step 4 in our investigation of caregiver ethnotheories, which was conducted on a subsequent visit. We reviewed the record of what the caregiver had told us and composed an individualized introduction to the next interview (Ethno #2) as follows:

> In our earlier conversation, you mentioned or hinted at the following things you see as important for your child as she is growing up (followed by a list of at least 3 and up to 7 themes cited in steps 1, 2 and/or 3, pausing after each to clarify, confirm, reformulate interactively). Which of these goals for _____ (the focal child) is the most important in your view? Are there any additional goals or hopes that you have for ____ (the focal child)? Where would you place (each of these) relative to the other ones we have just discussed?

Thus, caregivers provided a set of goals and ranked them in order of importance.

Thereafter caregivers were asked a standard set of questions about what they considered optimal ways to help their child learn in each of five domains: learning about right and wrong, learning about the physical world, learning to communicate, learning to read and write, and learning about numbers. They were also asked their opinion about the relative importance and complementarity of the contri-

butions of home and school to the child's development in each of these domains.

In step 5 of the interview series, conducted several months after step 4, caregivers were presented a list of 30 goals extracted from the responses of all families in the sample (see Table 2 for a list of these goals). The goals were divided into three major categories: social and moral; personal; intellectual and academic. Caregivers were asked to rate the importance of each of the goals within categories on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 representing most important and 1 representing least important. Then they were asked to rank order their highest rated goals from each of these three categories. This procedure made it possible to examine the consistency of the importance placed on caregivers' original goals when they were presented in a different context.

Results

A. Parents' Socialization Goals for Their Children

Validity of the technique. Step 4 of the elicitation procedure described above may be regarded as the most constructively hermeneutical part of our investigation of caregiver ethnotheories. As such, it warrants further discussion. At a more general level, we believe that the reliability of qualitative analysis needs to be secured by some relatively objective indications of the reliability of the procedures followed in arriving at generalizations. Accordingly we are presenting elsewhere (Serpell et al., in preparation) what Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to as an "audit trail" of our procedures, which are summarized below.

Each RA met with one of the principal investigators of the project (RS, SS, LB) to review in detail the caregiver's responses to the Ethnotheory #1 interview. Together they reviewed both the Diary and the Ethnotheory #1 interview for expressions of value by the respondent and inductively derived a set of implicit socialization goals that appeared to inform the meanings she had imputed to the various recurrent activities in her child's everyday life. These inferred goals were then discussed with the caregiver in a subsequent interview. As much as possible, we attempted to word the goals in the respondent's own words and to cite examples from the diary and interview to support our identification. Each parent also was encouraged to add goals that he or she felt was important but were not queried by the interviewer.

For example, one (low-income, European-American) mother's inferred goals were: having good social skills, importance of learning, being happy, wanting to learn. The following discussion between the mother and the interviewer illustrates the negotiation of the inferred goal "importance of learning."

> *I*: Okay, and then another one (goal) was ... about the importance of her learning. There you talked about her doing her homework and interested in getting the "Hooked on Phonics" for them to work with.
>
> *M*: Yeah, I have it, and it's worked for Whitney (focal child's older sister) and she's doing it, too good to be true. Maybe she'll just, someday she'll have patience for it, and she just won't have no patience for it at all. It..., that's probably normal on my family,...

Table 2
Parents' Salient Developmental Goals Extrapolated from Negotiations in Ethnotheory Interview #2

Social/Moral Goals
1. Grow up safely
2. Stay away from violence
3. Share things with friends
4. Form close trusting relationships
5. Learn to get along with others
6. Be considerate of others
7. Learn how to act in public
8. Learn faith in God
9. Learn right from wrong
10. Learn to be respectful of adults and parents
11. Learn to use good judgment
Personal Goals
12. Be sure of him/herself, know that she/he has something to contribute
13. Grow up happy, enjoy life
14. Get to be what she/he wants
15. Set his or her goals/choices
16. Be imaginative
17. Learn to be responsible
18. Become independent
Academic/Intellectual Goals
19. Express herself or himself
20. Learn about the world
21. Develop attention span
22. Learn to plan
23. Learn to do things for his/her self
24. Learn the value of money
25. Learn to read
26. Stay in school
27. Learn skills for doing well in school
28. Be persistent, motivated to learn
29. Learn to take responsibility for his or her own learning
30. Enjoy reading

'cause I, I got two instances where you just, I've got two brothers and sisters that can't read and write 'cause, it's like their tolerance is not very well....

I: So does that sound right to you? Do you feel that one of the things that you feel for Catherine is the "importance of her learning"?

M: Mm-hmm.

Most of the respondents agreed to the goal formulations that were proposed to them by the RA with little or no modification, although several added some further socialization goals to the list. In some cases, caregivers reformulated one or more of the inferred goals as initially proposed to them by the RA.

Our interest in identifying important concerns of caregivers regarding the development of their children led us to an investigation of the validity of our procedures. The results give us confidence in the usefulness of parental goals established in this way for further analysis of the ways in which the implicit theories or models held by caregivers contribute to the eco-cultural niche of child development. In the event that others will find the approach useful, we describe in more detail elsewhere (Serpell et al., in preparation) the attempts we made to establish for ourselves the reliability and validity of our procedure. A summary appears below.

Several months after Ethnotheory #2, two RA's independently searched for behavioral evidence to corroborate the authenticity of 178 of the 234 negotiated goals (76%). They independently examined the caregiver diaries, reviewed transcripts of Ethnotheory #1 in which caregivers provided elaborated discussions related to meanings of activities and routines, and studied RA notes verifying the derivation of the initial set of proposed goals. For example, one mother endorsed the goal "reading." Evidence supporting this endorsement came from several reports of reading in the diary (reading books with members of the family, going to Pizza Hut for a Book-It program) as well as the mother mentioning in Ethnotheory #1 that "as soon as she comes home from school, either she brings out the coloring book and the paint, or the books to read").

Supportive evidence was found in either the diaries, Ethnotheory #1 interview, or both for about 90% of the goals presented to the parents during Ethnotheory #2. Approximately 10% of the goals were corroborated by statements in the diaries, approximately 46% were supported by statements in Ethnotheory #1, and approximately 33% were supported both in the diary and Ethnotheory #1. In around 9% of the cases, the only confirmation for goals identification came from the RA's field notes. And in only around 2% of the cases was there no independent corroboration for the goals. However, in all instances, even those few where we could not trace how these goals were initially identified, all final goals were endorsed by parents as being accurate.

Categorization of parental socialization goals. The endorsed goals were assigned on intuitive conceptual grounds to one of four categories: *social/moral* (including rejection of violence, prosocial attitudes, tolerance, respectful behavior); *personal* (including self-esteem, confidence; pleasure, self-actualization, responsibility); *intellectual* (including everyday intelligence, competence, communication); or

Table 3
Percentage of Parents Endorsing Social, Personal, Academic, and Intellectual Goals During Ethnotheory Interview 2

	Low Income		Middle Income	Full Sample
	EuAm	AfAm		
Academic	82	71	71	76
Intellectual	47	71	43	55
Personal	88	86	100	90
Social/Moral	94	86	100	92

or *academic* (including achievement motivation, academic achievement, and literacy) (see Table 2). When the exact meaning of a respondent's goal was unclear, the interview transcripts were reviewed to clarify the meaning. Reliability for the coding was established by having a second coder independently categorize 50% of all the parental goals. Reliability was 94% for social/moral goals, 100% for personal goals, 100% for intellectual goals, and 94% for academic goals. Disagreements were resolved by discussion.

Parents were asked to endorse and rank between 3 and 7 socialization goals; the mean number of goals endorsed by each parent was 6.11 (SD = 1.74). Parents tended to endorse goals in all four categories, as reflected by a mean of 3.13 (SD = .78) categories endorsed. However, parents were more likely to endorse at least one personal or social/moral goal than an academic or intellectual goal (Cochran's Q (3) = 11.026, p = .012). There were no significant sociocultural differences in the nature of endorsed goals. Table 3 shows the percentages of parents who endorsed goals in the four categories.

Priorities in parents' socialization goals were revealed in the rankings they provided. Thirteen parents gave the highest ranking to a social/moral goal, 11 to a personal goal, 6 to an intellectual goal, and 8 to an academic goal. These differences among top-ranked categories were not statistically significant. However, there was a tendency for parents to be more likely to highly rank a social/moral or personal type of goal than an academic or intellectual goal, Chi-squared (1) = 2.63, $p < .10$. There were no sociocultural differences in patterns of highly ranked goals.

The enduring nature of parental socialization goals. Parents' goals initially were inferred from their responses to questions about the meanings of everyday activities, and then these possible goals were proposed to the parents as we negotiated actual goals. Several months later we used another elicitation method for documenting parents' goals for their children. A list of all goals initially endorsed by the parents was generated, and it was deter-

mined that despite minor wording variations, all could be encompassed within a set of 30 (see Table 2). As much as possible we used parents' own words in generating the list of common goals. We presented the list to the parents and asked them to rate the importance of each goal on a scale of 1 to 5 and then rank order the 9 most important ones.

Parents continued to attach importance to approximately 1/3 of the original negotiated goals (i.e., they gave ratings of 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale), suggesting that there is an enduring nature to some parental socialization goals. Moreover, goals that were enduring were frequently (63% of the time) among the top three negotiated goals ranked during the previous interview. The nature of the highly ranked goals was similar across sociocultural groups.

Parental Ideas About Optimal Ways to Cultivate Literacy

In addition to asking parents about their own socialization goals for their children, we asked them to consider socialization processes in the following five domains: morality ("learning right from wrong"), physical science ("learning about the physical world"), communication ("learning to communicate effectively with others"), literacy ("learning to read and write"), and numeracy ("learning about numbers"). Parents were asked, "What is the most effective way of helping your child learn (domain X)?" (see Appendix A). An analysis of the full range of responses to this set of questions and how the coding scheme was developed is presented elsewhere (Serpell et al., in preparation). In this report we compare and contrast responses only in the morality and literacy domains. We first consider the nature of the interventions recommended and then we consider how these were related to other aspects of parents' literacy orientation.

The Nature of the Intervention for Fostering Learning

Our coding scheme for categorizing the respondents' formulations of optimal intervention strategies was developed through a series of inductive steps interpreting selected sets of parental responses in the light of psychological theories of cognitive development (Serpell et al., in preparation). Three broad categories of intervention strategy were identified, as follows:

a) Proactive intervention, including:
   (1) deliberate instruction
   (2) modelling
   (3) motivating
b) In flight responsiveness, including:
   (4) differential reinforcement
   (5) contingent guidance
   (6) zoped matching
c) Reliance on the child's (7) experience, including both attempts to provide favorable environmental opportunities and a hands-off approach.

The distinctions among these categories of preferred, or "optimal," intervention strategies are drawn in terms of where the respondent lays primary emphasis: on deliberate proactive interventions designed to impact directly on the child's behavior, cognition, or motivation; on opportunistic responses to the child's behavior as it occurs; or on a less directly interventionist

stance that relies primarily on the impact of experiences that the child will encounter in self-governed activities in certain settings—a perspective consistent with Piaget's (1971) constructivist theory of cognitive development as driven by exploration and the related educational tradition of "discovery learning." An explicit theory of how best to foster child development probably needs to combine all of these elements, and we do not wish to suggest that they are in any sense mutually exclusive or incompatible. However, most of the verbal formulations that parents advanced in response to our inquiry about how they conceived the most effective way to help their child to learn in a given domain were quite selective.

The expression "in flight responsiveness" was borrowed from Tharp and Gallimore (1988) to describe an instructional attitude of trying to respond to the child's behavior opportunistically. Within this category we distinguished interventions that focused on providing positive or negative feedback to the behavior exhibited by the child in accordance with the parent's perception of its appropriateness (we termed this "differential reinforcement" following the usage of Skinner [1953]), and those that focused on guiding the child's responses in the direction of a desired outcome (contingent guidance). The small number of formulations within this latter category that were termed "zoped matching" (following Vygotsky's [1978] theoretical conception of instruction as assisting performance within the learner's zone of proximal development, cf. Vygotsky [1978]; Newman, Griffin, & Cole [1989]) reflected a conscious attempt by the parent to calibrate her response to the child's behavior relative to what she construed as the next step in the child's development.

Table 4 presents a definition and one or two examples for each category. In a small number of cases, the parent's explanation explicitly incorporated two different strategic elements, and both codes were assigned to the same response. Reliability of the coding scheme was established by having three independent raters code all responses; the coding was considered reliable if two of the three raters agreed on a response. The overall reliability of our codings ranged from 65% to 87%.

The distribution of preferred types of intervention for the literacy and morality domains is shown in Table 5. Two types of contrast are apparent: between the two domains of literacy and moral development, and within the literacy domain between the middle-income and low-income samples. Proactive intervention strategies were more often preferred for helping children learn to read and write than for learning right and wrong (McNemar's test for the significance of changes yielded a value of Chi-squared [1] = 3.76, p = .05). And when discussing how to foster learning to read and write, low-income parents were more likely to cite forms of proactive intervention than middle-income parents (Chi-squared [1] = 3.24, $.10 > p > .05$).

Relations Between Preferred Modes of Intervention and Orientations Toward Literacy Development.

As mentioned in the Introduction to this report, our previous analyses extrapolated from

Table 4 (revised September 1996)
Parental conceptions of the most effective way to help their child to learn to read and write, or to learn right from wrong.

(A) Proactive Intervention

Caregiver specifies deliverate, proactive interventions designed to impace directly on the child's behavior, cognition, or motivation.

(1) Deliberate instruction
Caregiver actively informs or teaches the child by sharing or giving knowledge, facts, or examples, such as in helping, practicing, telling, or demonstrating a given behavior.
Example (literacy): "take time out to sit down with them and to study, to plan"
(Low-income African American parent)
(morality): "I try to sit down and talk to her—try to show ... right from wrong."
(Low-income European American parent)

(2) Modelling
Caregiver provides information to the child through her/his own actions or behaviors; setting an example.
Example (literacy): "by example, because they are read to and they see you writing ... signing off of cards ... you read the cards to them ..."
(Middle-income African American parent)
(morality): "by example ... no matter what you do, your children set you up as the example of what's right and wrong: they see everything you do as right. If you vary from what you do, then they consider that, they see that's different and they're gonna ask you—they're gonna question it, you know 'Why did you do that Daddy?' 'Why'd you do that Mummy?' That's some of the first things—without even dealing with what's wrong."
(Middle-income African American parent)

(3) Motivating
Caregiver provides emotional support or promotes self-efficacy.
Example (literacy): "encouraging him to write"
(Middle-income European American parent)

(B) In-Flight Responsiveness

Caregiver focuses on the importance of responding appropriately to the child's behavior when and as it occurs.

(4) Differential reinformcement
Caregiver emphasizes consequences or outcomes of behaviors. Desired behaviors or goals are supported through (1) punishment, (2) external reward, or (3) promise of long-term positive outcome.
Example (morality): "just teaching them what, from when they start toddling around: 'You can't touch that; that's a No No!' ... giving them somehting else they can touch in place of what they can't touch. Don't just say 'you can't do that' and walk

away, you know I don't think that's a good idea—give them somehting else they can do. Don't back down if they do something wrong that they know is wrong. Don't back down on it: if you say 'I'm gonna punish you: You're gonna stay up in your room until dinner's done', don't back down. Make them stay up in their room until dinner's done."
(Low-income European American parent)

(5) Contingent guidance
Caregiver uses child's experiences to instruct. Current abilities, strenghts, interests, or weaknesses of the child act as the impetus for intervention. The child's behaviors/needs are assessed and the caregiver moves to correct, strengthen, or direct the child twoard achievement of goal. In essence the caregiver "seizes the opportunity for teaching."

Example (literacy): *"Like, she'll sit down and ... she'll ask me ... how to spell her sister's name. She already knows that, but she gets mixed up on her sister's name a lot ... She gets mixed up on the last letters ... she'll say 'Oh yeah, that's right: A!'."*
(Low-income European American parent)

(morality): *"if you see them do something wrong, you correct them and tell them—from experience, I guess ... you tell them what to do instead, and how they should act."*
(Low-income European American parent)

(6) Zoped matching
Caregiver articulates the need to calibrate her contingent responses to the child's behavior relative to the next step in the child's development.

Example (morality): *"reason, ... but it's not always easy to reason with a kid, it's sometimes hard to get back to that level, and remember, 'now how was she thinking', let's turn it around so she'll get this and then you finally come up with something and then you fell like 'wow I'm doing it!'"*
(Middle-income African American parent)

(C) Reliance on the Child's Experience

Caregiver recognizes the role of experiential learning and furnishes the child with materials and opportunities, emphasizing the importance of the child independently learning through experience, or trial and error.

Example (literacy): *"just being around it, I think, and offering them, having the materials to do it and ... not pushing to hard.... If they enjoy it like he does—he colors, he does all that stuff—it'll just come."*
(Middle-income European American parent)

(morality): *"let them learn from their mistakes ... because you can tell a child, 'don't do this', and 'do that', and 'do that', and they will learn until it actually happens ... they have to do it in order to learn from their mistakes."*
(Low-income African American parent)

Table 5 (revised September 1996)
Distribution of Parents' Preferred Types of Intervention for Literacy and Morality Development

	Types of Interventions		
	Proactive intervention	In flight responsiveness	Reliance on experience
Reading and Writing			
Low-Income European American (N = 15)	73%	13%	13%
Low-Income African American (N = 12)	75%	8%	17%
Middle-Income (N = 7)	29%	29%	43%
Full Sample (N = 34)	65%	15%	21%
Right and Wrong			
Low-Income European American (N = 15)	33%	67%	0
Low-Income African American (N = 12)	54%	38%	8%
Mid-Income (N = 7)	57%	43%	0
Full Sample (N = 34)	45%	53%	3%

parental reports of their children's recurrent activities (in response to earlier steps of our elicitation procedures) a set of three complementary cultural themes that conceptualize literacy as a source of entertainment, as a set of skills to be learned, or as an integral feature of everyday life (Baker et al., 1994). In order to explore the relevance of these themes to the pattern of children's early literacy development, we devised an index of the degree to which a given family appeared to give prominence to each of these themes. We focused on the entertainment and skills themes because they were more prominent and because their implications for socialization practices are somewhat contradictory. Theme endorsement

Table 6 (revised September 1996)
Percentage of Parents Favoring Proactive Intervention, Contingent Guidance, or Experiential Strategies for Helping their Child Learn to Read and Write According to the Cultural Theme Emphasized in the Niche

	Preferred intervention strategy		
	Proactive intervention	In-flight responsiveness	Reliance on experience
Literacy theme emphasis:			
Entertainment (n = 11)	36%	9%	55%
Balanced/ non-committal (n = 9)	67%	33%	0
Skills (n = 11)	91%	9%	0

was jointly indexed by a content analysis of the diaries and by the parents' response to the question from the Ethnotheory #2 interview about the most effective way to help their child learn to read and write (see Sonnenschein et al., 1996 for further information on the nature of the coding and the devised score).

Our further analysis now affords an opportunity to examine the relationship between that initial classification scheme and several other dimensions of caregiver ethnotheories. In order to classify families in terms of literacy theme endorsement, the distributions of each set of literacy theme endorsement scores were first divided into roughly equal proportions of high, medium, and low levels of endorsement based on a ranking of scores. Each family was then assigned to one of the following categories:

Entertainment emphasis (n=12): High endorsement of entertainment and either low (N=7) or medium (N=3) endorsement of skills, or medium endorsement of entertainment and low endorsement of skills (N=2).

Skills emphasis (n=12): High endorsement of skills and either low (N=8) or medium (N=4) endorsement of entertainment.

Balanced or non-committal view (n=11): Endorsement of both themes (entertainment and skills at the same level, high/high (n=1), medium/medium (n=6), or low/low (n=4).

Consistent with our analyses based only on diary data (Baker et al., 1994), middle-income families tended to be overrepresented in the entertainment-emphasis group and low-income families in the skills-emphasis group (Fisher's exact probability test, excluding the balanced/non-committal group, yielded a two-tailed $p < .02$). Within the low-income sample, African American families more often fell into the skills emphasis group than European American families ($p < .01$).

We next considered the relation between the literacy orientation of the niche (skills

emphasis, balanced/non-committal, entertainment emphasis) and the nature of the intervention strategy explicitly favored by the parents for helping their child learn to read and write. Table 6 shows a cross-tabulation of the percentage of caregivers espousing one of the three literacy views and their preferred intervention strategy for the domain of literacy. Almost all the parents who emphasized a skills orientation to emergent literacy favored proactive intervention, whereas among those who emphasized the entertainment orientation, the most popular intervention strategy was reliance on the child's experience. (Omitting both the balanced/non-committal group and the group favoring in-flight responsiveness yielded a Fisher's Exact $p < .02$.)

Although this is not a startling empirical finding, because the data used for the two codings overlapped to some extent, it does constitute a strong validation of our earlier interpretation as well as an elaboration of it. First, we can now see more clearly that the distribution of orientations toward the cultural themes of literacy as a source of entertainment or as a set of skills to be learned is not sharply dichotomous: a substantial number of families appear to hold a balanced view that acknowledges the two cultural themes fairly equally. Second, the orientation of parents toward literacy as a source of entertainment has predictable consequences for their preferred strategy of intervention: such parents are more likely to express a preference for allowing the child to learn about literacy through exploration and discovery. This does not mean that they take for granted that the child will learn without any help, but they do tend to be less inclined to provide explicit instruction in these early years, preferring to engineer the environment in such a way that multiple opportunities occur for the child to acquire skills while discovering the pleasures of literacy. Third, this new perspective on the parents' ideas about child socialization shows that the type of intervention preferred by parents for fostering their child's development is considerably dependent on the domain under consideration. For instance, there was no correlation between the intervention strategy preferences of the parents in our sample for the socialization of literacy and their strategy preferences for the socialization of morality (chi-squared < 1).

Parental Views About the Contrastive Responsibility of the Home and School in Cultivating Literacy

Parents were asked as part of the Ethnotheory #2 interview to compare the responsibilities of the home and the school for fostering development in various domains (see Appendix A). Again we focus here only on the literacy and morality domains. Parental responses were coded into one of three mutually exclusive categories: primarily school, primarily home, equal emphasis between the home and school. The latter category included responses to the effect that a domain was cultivated initially at home but then primarily at school. Reliability was determined by having a secon rater independently code all of the responses. Overall interrater agreetment was 86%.

As shown in Table 7, there was a pronounced difference in the amount of responsibility attributed to school relative to home

Table 7
The Percentage of Parents Assigning Primary Responsibility to the Home or School for Children's Learning

	Primarily Home	Both School and Home	Primarily School
Right and Wrong			
Low-Income European American	42.9%	57.1%	0
Low-Income African American	91.7%	8.3%	0
Mid-Income	42.9%	57.1%	0
Full Sample	60.6%	39.4%	0
Reading and Writing			
Low-Income European American	6.7%	53.3%	46.6%
Low-Income African American	30.8%	46.2%	23.1%
Mid-Income	14.3%	42.9%	42.9%
Full Sample	17.1%	48.6%	34.3%

depending on the domain in question. No parents regarded school as primarily responsible for promoting children's knowledge of right or wrong; in fact, most parents (61%) reported that the home was primarily responsible for fostering this aspect of moral development. In contrast, only 17% of the parents reported that the home was primarily responsible for fostering literacy development. The parents were fairly equally divided between attributing responsibility to both the home and school and to the school alone.

The various sociocultural groups displayed a high degree of consensus in their attributions, and most of the sociocultural comparisons were not statistically significant. However, low-income African American parents were significantly more likely than low-income European American parents to view the home as primarily responsible for promoting moral development, (1) = 6.80, $p < .009$. Low-income European American families were more likely to report that both the home and school are responsible for development in this domain.

Individual Approaches to the Socialization of Literacy

In the preceding sections we discussed parental goal hierarchies, beliefs about optimal

modes of intervention, endorsement of particular cultural themes about literacy, and responsibilities of the home and school. In this section, we will illustrate how these various components of a caregiver's implicit theoretical model fit together by integrating these various dimensions into a single idiographic profile.

We begin with three parents, drawn from the three different sociocultural groups, all of whom expressed a marked and enduring concern with nurturing their child's development in the domain of literacy and/or schooling. We then consider two other parents whose salient concerns were in domains other than literacy/schooling.

Literacy domain: low-income African American mother. Mrs. J., a 33-year-old, low-income African American mother of two, is a full-time homemaker who has never worked outside the home since completing high school. Other members of the household are Amina, the focal child, her brother who is two years older, and their stepfather. Our analysis revealed just one "enduring" goal for this parent, coded as "learn skills for doing well in school." Mrs. J. wrote in her diary three times that Amina had asked when being tucked up in bed "Is there school tomorrow?" Also, during Ethno #1, she interpreted the recurrent activity of Amina "playing school with her brother and cousin" as follows:

> to me it would mean, like, she enjoys school a lot. It would mean she really likes school a lot and she can't get enough of school. I think it is she just don't stay in school long enough. If it got to the point when Amina would have to stay in school all day, she would do it!

Earlier during that interview she remarked:

> Yesterday she didn't have no school and she wanted to go to school but there was no school for her yesterday. It was only school for, like, the afternoon children.... She the only child I see that loves to go to school. Most children wouldn't care if they went or not.

When the topic of spending a lot of time on school activities was explored at the beginning of the Ethno #2 interview, Mrs. J. explained:

> it is like she's really focusing on all the work she is doing now, because sometimes Amina gets in there and she thinks it's really playtime a lot of the school, but then she has to, like—I have to let, tell her that it is not playtime all the time in school: you have to sit there and work, 'cause Amina get in school and won't open her mouth!

I: Right, and why d'you feel it is important that she has to spend this time on let's say school things—since that's what she likes?

M: Well, it is good that she, you know, focuses on it, because, as she moves from one grade to another she'll know that work that....

I: So, it is to know her school work better?

M: Uhhm, 'cause you see right now she is in Pre-K, but she is on a—they put her on a level like Kindergarten. So, when she move to Kindergarten, she already be prepared for all that.

When asked to rank the seven goals formulated up to that point, Mrs. J. ranked "to know her school work better" as number 1.

Five months later, in the fall, when she was presented with the full array of goals cited by parents in the intellectual and academic domain, Mrs. J. rated nine of them with a "5 =

one of the most important things for me," and ranked the following highest overall:

1. learn to read
2. learn to do things for herself
3. stay in school
4. learn skills for doing well in school

Below these came several goals in the social and moral domain:

5. grow up safely
6. learn faith in God
7. learn right from wrong
8. learn to be respectful to adults and parents
9. learn to use good judgment

None of the goals in the personal domain were selected for this top tier, even though several received ratings of 5.

When asked about the optimal intervention method for helping a child of this age to learn to read and write, Mrs. J. replied:

> To me the way I would do it, I would like sit Amina down and I would write her name out first and then I would tell Amina to make the first letter. She'll pick a book on her own and, you know, she pretend she read but when I sits there and read with her, you know, I points to the word as I read along with her so she'll know how to, you know, identify the word that I am reading. I would think that soon, when she get in kindergarten, Amina she will be able to read and write.

This was coded as an instance of belief in the efficacy of deliberate instruction, a form of proactive intervention.

When asked about the relative degrees and kinds of responsibility of the school and the home for various "parts of the child's learning," Mrs. J. attributed greater responsibility to the home for learning about what is right and wrong and for learning to read and write.

With respect to the two cultural themes about the nature of emergent literacy, Mrs. J. received a medium-level rating on our index of endorsement of the theme of literacy as a source of entertainment (2.20), and a high rating on the index of endorsement of the theme of literacy as a skill to be taught (3.00).

Literacy domain: low-income European American mother. Mrs. R., a low-income, European American mother of three, is 26 and a graduate of a Catholic High School. She does not currently work outside the home and lives with her two sons (William, the focal child, and Norman, who is two years older) and a daughter (Rachel, three years younger). Our analysis revealed four "enduring" goals for this mother, coded as "get a good education," "self-confidence," "learn to do things for himself," and "do what makes him happy." The goal "get a good education" was not one of the goals proposed to Mrs. R. during the Ethno #2 interview, but was a goal that Mrs. R. added. A review of the diary showed that educational activities, particularly reading books at bedtime, were routine. For example, Mrs. R. wrote:

> Going to Bed Act.
>
> William is laying in his bed. And Norman in his. They just Said There prays. I'm Reading them A Alf book. Now They are fast asleep. William has No Trouble going Too sleep.

During the ecological inventory interview, Mrs. R. again indicated that educational activities were important to her, that she read to her children every night, and that they would sometimes "make-up homework" and that she "works with them" on their numbers.

Mrs. R. ranked "Get a good education" second of seven goals. She explained: "So he

can continue his life for himself and get a good job and take care of himself, in case I'm not around."

When the interviewer asked what would help foster his getting a good education, Mrs. R. replied,

> Well, I will be here to talk to him about it and entice him to do it and let him know that he's important to have a good education. 'Cause it's something I never got and now I realize it's something I should have had, you know?

Four months later, when she was presented with the full array of goals cited by parents in the intellectual and academic domain, Mrs. R. rated five of them with a "5 = one of the most important things for me," and ranked the following among her top nine goals overall:

6. learn to do things for himself
7. learn to take responsibility for his own learning
9. stay in school

Three other goals that she ranked highly were in the social and moral domain:

3. learn to be respectful to adults and parents
4. learn right from wrong
5. learn faith in God

and three others in the personal domain:

1. grow up happy, and enjoy life
2. set his own goals, make his own choices
8. know that he has something to contribute

When asked about the optimal intervention method for helping a child learn to read and write, Mrs. R. responded:

> Me, helping here at home and his teachers help him in school.
>
> *I*: With any specific kinds of activities?
>
> *M*: What do you mean by that?
>
> *I*: Like you help him here, in general helping him or helping him with ... ?
>
> *M*: Well, whatever he wants me to. Or like when he brings paper home from school we do that, or sometimes....
>
> *I*: So helping him with things that are related to reading, like the book.
>
> *M*: Uh huh.

This was coded as an indication of belief in deliberate instruction.

When asked about the relative degrees and kinds of responsibilities of the school and the home for various "parts of the child's learning," Mrs. R. indicated that the home and the school shared the responsibility equally for learning about what's right and wrong. However, she attributed greater responsibility to the school for the child's learning to read and write; because in school, children can "share different books."

With respect to the two cultural themes about the nature of emergent literacy, Mrs. R. received a low rating on our index of endorsement of the theme of literacy as a source of entertainment (0.80) and a high rating on the index of endorsement of the theme of literacy as a skill to be taught (3.00).

Literacy domain: middle-income African American mother. Mrs. M., a 30-year-old, middle-income African American mother of four, works part-time as a realtor, is trained in secretarial work, and has written a book aimed at an audience of young children on her computer, which she hopes to get published. Other members of the household are Jennifer, the focal child, her brothers who are one and three years older, her younger sister, and their father who works two jobs, one part-time in the evenings, and has almost completed a university degree. Our analysis revealed four "enduring" goals for this parent, coded as "set her

own goals in life," "learn to be responsible," "become independent," and "stay in school/get an education." Mrs. M. wrote in her diary at one juncture:

> We have mommy school today we have art. That's our major activity. We always have homework in our major activity & our major activity today is art. I covered the walls of the boys room with tag board and I gave them markers paint, crayons, diff't size markers and fluorescent, lots of color, so they had plenty to work with. They had glue and they could stick things on to the tag board. I covered it w/8 sheets of tag board & each of them had a section & they worked well. They wrote things, they drew pictures of people. Jennifer likes to write. Jennifer is a natural journalist I'd say. She keeps a journal at home, she writes things that she does, people that she know....

During the Ecological Inventory, Mrs. M. explained with reference to "word games" that they occur:

> quite often, because I make them look everything up in the dictionary. Yeah, everything that, well, 'do you know what that means'? And they can't trip the other one up: 'you don't know what that means—Mom's going to make you get the dictionary!' So I make her get the dictionary, and we look it up.

With reference to refrigerator displays, she recounted the following anecdote:

> Well, now that John is reading and he's reading everything to Peter and everyone else, he looks on the refrigerator last week and said, "Wow mommy, I like that, that's looks cute." I said, "What is it?" "Life isn't passing me by, it's running me over." [Everyone laughs.] I said, "Yeah I've had that a while," and he says, "Yeah but now I know what it says." So it, you know he can read it now, we started out with words, you know a word a week. And one word a week we used the magnetic alphabet letters. And we put them on there and any time during the day I might say spell egg or whatever. And they have to remember they saw it on the refrigerator, what is it, and they spell it. So if I get them, I get to raz them and they hate that, they are like you couldn't even spell it so don't even, so we do that.

The family has a large collection of books for children of all ages. Mrs. M elaborates:

> They have that Early World of Learning from, who makes that Childcraft? Rare Book Encyclopedia? We have that set, so we have the Childcraft, Early World, and the World Book Encyclopedias. And that has all kinds of activities in it, books and coloring and all sorts of things.... We've got ABCs, we've got the laminated ones, we've got everything from the very first book you can have fabric, all the way up. Anybody of any age can come and there is something there for you. Even something if you just want something old we've got them from the 1940s.

During the Ethno #2 interview, we asked her to explain the concept of "mommy school." She replied:

> Mommy school got started when they were infants. I used to exercise them. So we started out with an aerobics class. And so, everything I taught them was a learning thing, and they always wanted to know "When are we going to school?" "Well, you're in school, you're in mommy school: all your life, you have mom; so that's mommy school." Everything they learn from me is a part of mommy school. We had formal sessions, because the girls were home in the daytime and the boys were in school. So the

> girls had mommy school that they could call "Well, we do go to school!" (I: Oh, OK, right!) So that's how we came up with the name Mommy school.

When asked to rank the seven goals formulated up to that point, Mrs. M. ranked "education" as No. 2.

Five months later, when she was presented with the full array of goals cited by parents in the intellectual and academic domain, Mrs. M. rated five of them with a "5 = one of the most important things for me," and ranked the following among her top nine goals overall:

5. learn to do things for herself
6. be persistent, motivated to learn
7. stay in school

She also rated very high overall several goals in the social and moral domain:

1. learn faith in God
4. learn to use good judgment
9. learn to get along with others

and in the personal domain:

2. become independent
3. learn to be responsible
8. set her own goals and make her own choices

When asked about the optimal intervention method for helping a child of this age to learn to read and write, Mrs. M. replied: "let them draw, they're scribbling." This was coded as an instance of reliance on the child's experience.

When asked about the relative degrees and kinds of responsibility of the school and the home for various "parts of the child's learning," Mrs. M. stated: "home: I basically think everything should be learned at home and reinforced at school."

With respect to the two cultural themes about the nature of emergent literacy, Mrs. M. received a medium rating on our index of endorsement of the theme of literacy as a source of entertainment (1.40), and a low rating on the index of endorsement of the theme of literacy as a skill to be taught (1.00).

Moral domain: African American, low income. Mrs. D. is a 36-year-old mother of four, who is currently not working but occasionally volunteers in school and in a nearby hospital. Twirl, the focal child, is the third child. His older siblings, Leon and Sharonda are 15 and 11 years older, while another brother, Throne, is just a year younger. They all live in the same household, together with Twirl and Throne's father, Mr. S.

Our analysis showed one enduring focus, "feel free to tell when he thinks something is wrong." During the Ethno #1 interview, Mrs. D. explained:

> Yeah, you don't want them to be scared but you don't want them to trust everybody. And you want them to be nice and respect everybody but you want them to trust you enough to come and tell you anything and everything.... What I don't like about adults is when they say why you always snitching, you won't never have no friend cause you always telling. And I always tell that person that with my kids, they suppose to tell anything that they think is wrong. Because if you don't tell, you won't know what's right or wrong.

Based on Mrs. D.'s explanations about this goal, it was classified as a moral goal. When this goal was proposed to her during the Ethno #2, Mrs. D. ranked it as the sixth most important among seven goals. In another interview three months later, she was presented with the full array of goals cited by parents in the social

and moral domain. Mrs. D. rated three of them with a "5 = one of the most important things for me," and ranked the following among her top six goals overall:

1. learn right from wrong
2. learn to be respectful to adults and parents
4. learn faith in God

She also rated very high the following goals in the intellectual/academic domain:

3. learn to do things for himself
6. stay in school

and in the personal domain:

5. know that he has something to contribute

When asked about the optimal intervention method for helping a child learn to read and write, Mrs. D. explained: "That's really doing it with them, showing them. You know, taking time to do it with them. And by reading to them." This was coded as an indication of belief in deliberate instruction.

When asked about the relative degrees and kinds of responsibilities of the school and the home for various "parts of the child's learning," Mrs. D. attributed more responsibility to the school for the child's learning to read and write. In contrast, she attributed greater responsibility to the home for the child's learning about right and wrong.

With respect to the two cultural themes about the nature of emergent literacy, Mrs. D. received a medium rating on our index of endorsement of the theme of literacy as a source of entertainment (1.80) and a medium rating on the index of endorsement of the theme of literacy as a skill to be taught (2.00).

Personal domain: middle-income European American mother. Mrs. C., a 27-year-old, middle-income, European American mother of four, works 25 hours a week in the retail trade. She dropped out of high school in the eleventh grade, but went on to obtain the GED. Other members of the household are Jenny, the focal child, her two brothers who are two and four years older, her baby sister, and their stepfather. Our analysis revealed two "enduring" goals for this parent, coded as "become independent" and "becoming an individual," both of which were assigned to the personal domain. Throughout her diary, Mrs. C. narrates incidents wherein she lets Jenny decide what she wants to do, for example, what to eat for breakfast, choosing an Easter card for her grandmother, going to the park, spending the night over at her friend's house.

When several goals were proposed to her during the Ethno #2 interview, Mrs. C. ranked "become independent" as the most important among three goals. She then added "becoming an individual," and ranked this as her second most important goal. In the next interview three months later, she was presented with the full array of goals cited by parents in the personal domain. Mrs. C. rated three of them with a "5 = one of the most important things for me," and ranked the following among her top nine goals overall:

4. become independent
7. set her own goals, make her own choices
8. grow up happy, and enjoy life

She also gave high rankings to the following goals in the intellectual/academic domain:

2. learn to do things for herself
5. learn to read
9. stay in school

and in the social/moral domain:

1. learn to be respectful to adults and parents

3. be considerate of others, kind, and cooperative
6. learn to use good judgment

When asked about the optimal intervention method for helping a child learn to read and write, Mrs. C. explained: "If she asks me something, you know, well, say 'Is this that?' and I'll say 'No, this is that' ... and she'll say 'What does it mean?'" This was coded as an instance of the strategy of contingent guidance.

When asked about the relative degrees and kinds of responsibilities of the school and the home for various "parts of the child's learning," Mrs. C. attributed more responsibility to the school for the child's learning to read and write, whereas the home has more responsibility for the child's learning about what is right and wrong.

With respect to the two cultural themes about the nature of emergent literacy, Mrs. C. received a low rating on our index of endorsement of the theme of literacy as a source of entertainment (0.00) and a low rating on the index of endorsement of the theme of literacy as a skill to be taught (1.00).

Closing comments. The multidimensional complexity of these idiographic profiles tends to undermine attempts at generalization. Although we have been able to detect certain patterns of association, as presented in previous sections, it is clear that much of the "unexplained variance" arises from the uniqueness of each caregiver's conceptualization of her relationship with a particular child in a particular set of social circumstances.

Discussion

This investigation of parental ideas situates the topic of emergent literacy within the broader context of their socialization goal hierarchy and their conceptions of optimal intervention strategies to foster children's development in various domains. We found that most of the parents in our sample acknowledged literacy among the developmental outcomes they desired for their child and sought actively to promote. These were, however, only one part of a broad array of parental goals that ranged across moral, social, personal, and intellectual domains. Indeed, although for some parents learning to read and write was one of their most salient socialization goals, for many it occupied a position secondary in importance to moral, social, or personal development. Furthermore, a substantial proportion of parents regarded the cultivation of their child's literacy as primarily a responsibility of the school, whereas in the domain of moral development the balance of responsibility was tipped more toward the home.

At a finer grain level of analysis, we found that parents were generally able to articulate an account of their strategic approach to promoting their child's development in the direction of their goals. The strategies they preferred were differentiated by domain, with more frequent emphasis on proactive interventions (such as deliberate instruction) in the domain of literacy, and more emphasis on inflight responsiveness (with contingent guidance or differential reinforcement) in the moral domain. Those parents who favored a strategy of proactive intervention tended to emphasize the theme of literacy as a set of skills to be acquired and included a high proportion of residents in low-income neighborhoods. Among the middle-income families on the other hand

many parents expressed a preference for reliance on the child's experience for them to acquire literacy through a process of discovery. These parents tended to emphasize the theme of literacy as a source of entertainment.

We have tried in this study to characterize the patterning of parental ideas in terms of linkages among components (endorsement of cultural themes and preference for interaction strategies), variation across domains of child development (proactive vs. other strategies x moral vs. literacy development), and differences between social groups. Each of these dimensions of patterning serves to illustrate the cultural origins of the implicit models held by parents to explain the nature of child development and to guide their actions as parents.

It appears to us that few, if any, of the parents in our sample subscribe to a fully articulated theory or a strongly delineated world view. They did, however, often invoke explanatory constructs that are consistent with one or more of the formal theories in the scientific literature (e.g., Skinner, 1953; Bandura, 1977; Piaget, 1971; Vygotsky, 1978). These constructs, and the themes about literacy as a set of skills or as a source of entertainment, are surely cultural in nature, reflecting ideas in circulation within a particular society and a particular historical era. The entertainment theme, for instance, is consonant with the notion that childhood should be fun—a theme widely celebrated in late twentieth-century Western media but much less conspicuous in European accounts of childhood in the nineteenth century (Valsiner & Lightfoot, 1992).

The fact that literacy occupies only a modest position among most of our parents' goal hierarchies serves as a valuable reminder that teachers and literacy researchers interacting with parents often use their prestige to focus the parents' attention on an institutionally defined agenda. Undoubtedly most parents in our sample acknowledge the importance of their child becoming literate. But for most of them this is only one of many equally important aspects of their socialization agenda.

The comparisons among groups in this report are hampered by the small numbers of families in each category—a shortcoming we expect to be reduced in our future work as the size of our longitudinal study's sample has now doubled. But this may not be the only explanation for the paucity of statistically significant differences between ethnic groups in our data. The cultural variables influencing parental ideas about literacy socialization in American society are just as likely to reflect the impact of economic circumstances as that of ethnic identity.

Historically, certain groups have been excluded from the centers in which educational theory and school policy are determined, and this may have resulted in curricula that are less responsive to the developmental needs of some groups than others (Tharp 1989; Allen & Boykin, 1992). But over and above such structural variables in the design of educational provision, differential access to education must surely influence the patterns of discourse about education in various communities. Bruner (1990) has drawn attention to striking similarities between some of the characteristics of language socialization described by Heath (1983) in the low-income, African American community in the Carolinas she called Track-

ton, and those described by P. Miller (1982) in the low-income, European American community of South Baltimore. It is quite plausible to suppose that in our study such similarities exist in patterns of literacy socialization between low-income African American and European American families.

The principal challenge of our research findings for educators lies, we believe, in the need to acknowledge the complexity, the rationality, and the legitimacy of parental perspectives on their child's development in families that have traditionally been regarded as largely devoid of understanding of, or commitment to, the cognitive developmental needs of their children. We have encountered frequent echoes of this deficit orientation in our interviews with teachers. Yet the picture that emerges from the interviews described in this report is mainly one of perceptive and caring parents. Many of the ideas they expressed in response to our open-ended questions are close to and compatible with cardinal features of contemporary educational orthodoxy (e.g., the various intervention strategies). But the linkages among these ideas are normally implicit and are only likely to be deployed in contexts where the parents perceive that their competence and goodwill are accepted as basic premises.

The question of why so much commonality exists among the ideas of scientific theories, educational policies, professional practitioners and lay parents is open to a number of different lines of speculative explanation. It may be that historically theoretical ideas have trickled down and been incorporated into everyday discourse, folk theories, and common sense (c.f., Moscovici, 1985). It may also be that theorists incorporate unconsciously a great deal of their local culture's preconceptions in what they present to academic audiences as formally derived from research (Serpell, 1990). Either way, the identification of such commonalities provides ground for cooperative and co-constructive discourse between parents and teachers in the design of children's introduction to the world of literacy.

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Appendix A

Caregiver Ethnotheory Interview #2

Date: ____

Remind M that we are interested in what it is like for FC to move from learning about things at home to learning at school. Because we are trying to learn how to build on what children have already learned in their homes and communities, we need to know what mothers think about what is important for their children. The purpose of this interview is to learn from her about what is important for FC's growth and learning.

Hierarchy of Goals for the Child's Development

8a. In our earlier conversation, you mentioned or hinted at the following thing you see as important for FC as he/she is growing up (list at least 3 and up to 7 themes cited in response to Part 1 items 3 to 7, pausing after each to clarify, confirm, reformulate interactively):

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8b. Which of these goals for _____ is the most important in your view?

WRITE ON NOTECARDS FOR RANKING

Prompt, if respondent is reluctant: "suppose a fairy godmother could give your child only one

of these qualities, which one would be your first choice?" and so on

Allow up to 3 ties per rank, but press for a minimum of three levels of the respondent's hierarchy:

A: most important

B: next most important

C: less important, but still highly valued, and so on.

RECORD THIS RANKING:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8c. Are there any additional goals or hopes that you have for _____?

If so, what are they?

WRITE ON CARDS

d. Where would you place this (each of these) relative to the other ones we have just discussed?

RECORD NEW RANKING:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

Antecedents of Individual Differences on Various Dimensions of Psychological Functioning

9. Several things in a child's life affect her/his chances of becoming/achieving each of the things you have listed. When you consider how differently things turn out for different children that you know (explain by reference to older siblings, neighbors, or other children attending the same pre-K, etc.), what do you think are the most important things affecting *any* child's, not just _ _____ development of (Goal #1)?

(If there are several goals tied at level A of the respondent's hierarchy, pose this Q. for each of them before proceeding to level B, etc.)

CAN USE NOTECARDS HERE TO WORK WAY THROUGH GOALS

Goal #1:

Goal #2:

Goal #3:

Goal #4:

Goal #5:

Goal #6:

Goal #7:

Optimal Methods for Modifying (Nurturing, Channelling, etc.) Each Dimension

13. It seems that some parents have differing ideas about the most effective way of helping a young child to learn these things, and teachers also do not always agree with one another about

this. What do you believe is the most effective way to help your child learn about some of these things?

(a) learning about what's right and wrong

(b) learning about the physical world

(c) learning to speak and understand language communicate effectively with others

(d) learning to read and write

(e) learning about numbers

Relative Importance and Complementarity of Contributions of Home and School to the Child's Development in Each Dimension

14. I'm going to ask you to tell me now how you feel about the responsibilities of the school and the home for each of these parts of the child's learning. Does one of these two worlds in which the child gains experience have more responsibility than the other, and do they have different responsibilities?

For instance, in the case of

(a) learning about what's right and wrong, does the school have any responsibilities, and if so, are they different from the responsibilities of you as a parent (caregiver) and the other adults here in the child's home?

Which is more important (or are they both equally important)?

(b) What about the child's learning about the physical world

(e.g., where food comes from, how her/his own body works, how the seasons change, how machines work, such as the electric light, the TV, the kitchen stove, the bus, etc.), does the school have any responsibilities and, if so, are they different from the responsibilities of you as a parent (caregiver) and the other adults here in the child's home?

Which is more important (or are they both equally important)?

(c) What about learning to communicate effectively with others?

(d) Learning to read and write?

(e) Learning about numbers?

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